A LETTER TO THE PARISHIONERS OF St. *B.*—— *A.*——

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SHEWING

The Uſe and Neceſſity of paying *Eaſter-Offerings*, now reſtored to the Pariſh Miniſter.

LONDON,

Printed for *Geo. Strahan*, at the *Golde Ball*, over-againſt the *Royal-Exchange*, in *Cornhill*. 1700.

L:8141

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LETTER

To the Parishioners of

St. *B.*—— *A.*——

Shewing the Use and Necessity of Paying Easter-Offerings.

SIRS,

THE Feast of *Easter* is now approaching, wherein our Holy Church Commemorates the great Mercies of God, in ac-

compliſhing our Redemption by the Death and Reſurrection of our Bleſſed Saviour. 'Tis at this time, eſpecially, that we ought to expreſs our Thankfulneſs to God, by acts of Piety, and there are no actions ſo worthy our thoughts as thoſe which immediately concern the Honour and Service of God. I think it all times my Duty to promote the Intereſt of Religion and the good of your Pariſh, and have therefore, upon your late Vacancy, endeavour'd to make the beſt choice I could of a Miniſter, to inſtruct you for your Soul's Health: I am verily perſwaded, that I have placed one among you, who is both able and willing to diſcharge the Duty of his

Place:

Place; and who, I doubt not, will be careful to watch over you, as becomes a faithful Paſtor. My next Care is to provide him a more ſufficient ſupport, thereby to encourage his Labours, and to enable him to maintain ſuch Aſſiſtance; as will be needful to perform the great Buſineſs of your Pariſh.

I am willing to forego my right to ſome part of that *Revenue*, to which I am legally Intitul'd, and to apply the ſame for promoting the Honour of God and Intereſt of his Church; therefore I have authoriz'd Mr *Kennet*, your Miniſter, to collect and take to his own uſe, the *Offerings* due at *Eaſter*; and do earneſtly recommend it to you, as your Du-

ty, to pay the ſame, juſtly and conſcientiouſly, which, I hope, you will do, when I have informed you,

1. Of the Nature of Offerings.

2. The uſe and neceſſity of paying them.

1ſt, *The Nature of Offerings.*

By Offerings are uſually underſtood thoſe Gifts which are given, by devout Men, to God and the Church, which Gifts were commonly Offered with Solemnity and Devotion, at the *Altar*; ſome upon certain Feſtival Days, and others upon occaſion of particular Mercies receiv'd by particular Perſons: Thoſe which were offered upon Feſtival Days,

Days, were on *Sundays*, the general Days of Christians Assembling themselves, or on certain Feast-Days, appointed by the Church to be kept Holy, in remembrance of the great Favours receiv'd from God, in completing our Redemption by the *Conception*, *Nativity*, *Death*, *Resurrection* and *Ascension*, of our Blessed Saviour. These Offerings were at first the Free-will Sacrifices of Pious Christians; but when Piety and Zeal grew cold, and Men began to fail of their Duty, then the Laws provided a Means of ascertaining every Man's *Offerings*, thereby to reserve a competent Livelihood to the Parish Minister; and now the *Offerings* due by the Laws of the Realm

Note, *That at the time the Offerings were ſetled at that rate, two Pence was equivalent to a Shilling at this Day.*

are two Pence for every Communicant, or of every Pariſhioner above the Age of 16, payable at the Feaſt of *Eaſter*, by the Maſter of every Family, for himſelf, his Wife, Children, and Servants: And now having inform'd you of the Nature of Offerings, I am, in the next place, to acquaint you with,

2dly, *The Uſe and Neceſſity of paying Offerings.*

The chief uſe and deſign of paying Offerings, is, That we may Honour God with our Subſtance, as well as our Bodies; for as he made us, ſo

ſo he gives us all that we poſſeſs; and 'tis reaſonable, that we ſhould pay him ſome portion of what we enjoy, in token of his Dominion over us, and of our Subjection to him; 'tis the advice of the Wiſe Man, *Honour God with thy Subſtance, and with the firſt fruits of all thy increaſe*, Prov. 3. 9. And it has been always accounted a part of our Worſhip, *To bring Preſents unto him that ought to be feared*, Pſal. 76. 11. Almighty God took ſpecial Care in the Modelling of the *Jewiſh* Worſhip, *that none ſhould appear before him empty*, Exod. 23. 15. That ſo he might be honour'd with a tribute from the *Hands* as well as the *Hearts* of his People.

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The reaſon why God commanded the *Jews* to dedicate part of their Wealth, was, for the Maintenance of the *Jewiſh Clergy*, a ſet of Men appointed to be free from Secular Employments, that they might offer up Prayers and Sacrifices for that People. The ſame Care hath God taken of a more *Royal Prieſthood*, that of the Chriſtian Church; for, as by the particular command of God, *Thoſe who ſerved at the Altar, were partakers of the Altar*, ſo, under the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, Chriſt has ordained, That *thoſe who Preach the Goſpel, ſhould live of the Goſpel*, 1 Cor. 9, 13, 14. and great reaſon it is, That thoſe who diſpenſe to us Spiritual Comforts,

forts, ſhould be ſupplyed, by us, with Temporal Conveniencies.

I take the liberty to preſcribe you two ſhort Rules for your more faithful diſcharge of this Duty; they are,

1. *Juſtice.*
2. *Chearfulneſs.*

1. JUSTICE.

All Perſons whatſoever, as well Adverſaries as Friends, have a right to our *Juſt Dealing*; but more eſpecially they are intitul'd to it, who may be truly termed our Benefactors; ſuch are the Miniſters of Chriſt, whoſe Buſineſs and Care it is to inſtruct us and inform us in all things neceſ-

ſary to Salvation; they are thoſe who by wholſom Doctrines and Advice, do keep us from degenerating into wild and ſavage Creatures; for ſuch were the Inhabitants of this Iſland, before the Glorious Light of the Goſpel ſpread its bright Beams upon this Land. The Errand of thoſe who Preach the Goſpel, is not to make us an offer of ſhort and tranſient Pleaſures, but to lead us into that way which will bring us to a durable and everlaſting Happineſs: And ſurely, thoſe who teach us *Devotion towards God, and upright Dealing towards others*, have deſervedly a right to our *Juſtice*.

I have

I have no reaſon to doubt your *Juſtice* to your Miniſter, when I conſider with what *Zeal* you are promoting ſome good Works in your Pariſh, towards the ſupport of the Poor, and the propagating Chriſtian Knowledge among the younger ſort; but give me leave, in a few words, to acquaint you what Offerings you are obliged to pay.

The Offerings then that you are legally obliged to pay Mr. *Kennet*, are two Pence a Head, according to the Number of your Families, as I have before informed you; but ſeeing I have, for your ſake, and for the Honour of Religion, reſtor'd them to their firſt Religious Uſe, I rather

rather wish that you would think your selves obliged to do as did the Primitive Christians, those Pious Souls, who began to Honour God with their Substance, as soon as they had embrac'd the happiness of the Christian Faith; for they thought themselves oblig'd to offer according to their *Ability*, and thought nothing too much for them who Preached the glad tidings of the Gospel; but alas, many in this Age are arriv'd to that heinous degree of Impiety, as not only to grudge the giving a little of their abundance, but even to wrong and deprive their Ministers of what they can clandestinely conceal from them.

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I would therefore exhort you, for your own ſakes, as well as that of your Miniſter, in the making your Offerings, to conſider your own Abilities; and if you intend to act the parts of good Chriſtians, and are reſolved to manifeſt your ſelves true Servants of God, to pay your Offerings not barely according to the Rules preſcrib'd by the Laws of the Land, but according to the Reaſon and Dictates of a good Conſcience, and according as God hath bleſſed you; 'tis true, that according to the Laws and Statutes of this Realm, no other *Offerings* can be exacted than what are preſcrib'd by Law, but a good Chriſtian will not think he has done his

Duty,

Duty, when he has done all that the Laws oblige him; thus, for example, a conſcientious Perſon will think himſelf bound to ſerve God every day, tho' the Laws compel him only to Worſhip God on *Sundays*.

You will alſo think your ſelves obliged to offer according to your Ability, if you conſider, when you make your *Offering*, that God is not pleaſed with a mean and ſordid Service; for he has diſcouraged the Offering of thoſe who Offer the *Price of a Dog, or the hire of a Harlot*, Deut. 23. 18. That is an Oblation which is mean and nothing worth, or that which is got by Wickedneſs and Injuſtice; but he has encourag'd thoſe

to

to hope for a *plentiful Harvest, who sow their seed plentifully; but they that sow sparingly, shall also reap sparingly.*

Now that your *Offerings* may truly become a Religious Performance, I shall further direct you in the other Rule I propos'd, and that is,

2. CHEARFULNESS.

Chearfulness is at all times the Duty of a Christian, but then especially, when he is about to exercise a Religious act, such as is the payment of *Offerings* towards the Maintenance of our Ministers, *those Embassadors of Christ*; for whether we distribute Alms, or make an Oblation, we ought

ought to do it chearfully and not grudgingly or of neceſſity, becauſe God loveth a chearful giver, 2 *Cor.* 9, 6, 7. I am not deſirous to boaſt of my good intention towards you, in beſtowing thoſe legal Dues of mine upon your well-deſerving Miniſter, but this I deſire to aſſure you, that I have done it chearfully, with a proſpect of promoting your Good, and therein the Glory of God, and Honour of Religion.

I intreat you alſo to remember, That as the juſt and conſcientious payment of your *Offerings* will be a well-pleaſing Sacrifice to God, for the Reaſons before-mention'd, ſo it is the higheſt Indignity and Affront to Almighty God, to with-

withhold whatsoever is Dedicated to the Service of his Ministers; for he counts it no less than *Sacriledge*, Mal. 3. 8. the worst sort of Robbery, and which was one great cause of God's inflicting heavy Judgments upon the *Jews*; for you may observe a severe Doom pronounced by the Prophet *Malachi* for this very Sin, *Mal.* 3. 9. which may serve as a sufficient Warning for all those who boast themselves in their Cunning of defrauding their Minister, and concealing his Dues: But let such remember, That tho' they escape Vengeance here, yet they are heaping up to themselves Wrath against the Day

Day of Wrath; which, that you may escape, shall be the humble and fervent Prayer of,

Your Christian Friend

and Brother,

S. B.

FINIS.